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>> SHARON: We try to broaden the spectrum of choices we offer them by being holistic in terms of helping them overcome the barriers they see to having what we would call productive, safe, secure lives. That may be helping them get their GED, housing or save money to buy their own house. On the other side of that, it may be helping them find substance-abuse counseling or helping them get into therapy. If you've been beaten for a while, you probably are going to need help and support. We provide education support groups to everyone who comes to the shelter to help them figure out what's going on and give them alternatives.

Is there a limit to the length of time that a woman can stay in a shelter?

SHARON: We do not have time limits. Originally, when we started almost 30 years ago, it was assumed that it was a temporary stay of 30 days. We realized that wasn't working. Especially in these economic times, many women don't have somewhere to go after 30 days. What we're trying to do, and what we are moving into, is trying to set up transitional housing after a family leaves the emergency shelter.

The piece that underlies all of this, that is easy to forget, though clearly the biggest issue, is the safety factor. Many women still are not safe in 30 days. Their batterer still may be trying to stalk them, follow them, find them. So we have to do everything under the mantle of looking at all those safety issues.

MARY O: Most of our programs actually have some sort of housing program. There are only four that really don't have housing programs. That gets to the issue of helping women move on after they've spent time in the shelter. I'd say for most of them, housing is

a big part of why they stay in an abusive situation. They need to be able to set up independent households. That's why so many of our programs have found housing. Some have it on their campus and some have arrangements with the public housing authority in their communities. But most programs think about how to help women after they've left the shelter, and how to help them make that transition.

What measures are in place to hopefully help reduce and/or prevent the incidents of domestic violence in Kentucky?

SHARON: I'm historically not a big fan of prevention because I think there have been lots of failed attempts. So I was very reluctant to move into this. Not because I don't want it prevented, but because it seemed like such a big issue, and doing community education didn't seem to be making a big difference. But I think everyone feels that way. While we have to continue to focus on intervention, there is a move toward trying to do research-based prevention efforts. One that we're involved with is the Green Dot initiative. It's a very simple bystander-intervention project. It's helping make people, communities, institutions and all of us — whether it's bus drivers to banks — be aware of signs of violence against women, and in our case domestic violence, and figure out ways to intervene and stop it before it actually happens.

About three years ago we worked with the Center for Disease Control, who helped us incorporate prevention into everything we do. We changed our vision statement to reflect it. We added a committee to our board on prevention. We have a certification program where we train our staff in shelters around the state to provide services and work with survivors, and we've incorporated prevention into that. Everything we do has incorporated prevention.

One of the programs we're doing now is working with the Girl Scouts. Dr. Dorothy Edwards, who is the founder of Green Dot, has modified the program, which started on college campuses, for Daisies and Brownies. This fall we are going to open a statewide program with the two Girl Scout counsels in the state, working with the Daisies and Brownies on Green Dot Prevention. In their case, for little kids, it focuses on bullying and the roots of domestic violence.